

A. BASIC NOTIONS

1. We have no autograph manuscripts of the Greek and Roman classical writers and no copies which have been collated with the originals; the manuscripts we possess derive from the originals through an unknown number of intermediate copies, and are consequently of questionable trustworthiness.

The business of textual criticism is to produce a text as close as possible to the original (*constitutio textus*).

A dictation revised by the author must be regarded as equivalent to an autograph manuscript.

2. In each individual case the original text either has or has not been transmitted. So our first task is to establish what must or may be regarded as transmitted -- to make the recension (*recensio*); our next is to examine this tradition and discover whether it may be considered as giving the original (*examinatio*); if it proves not to give the original, we must try to reconstruct the original by conjecture (*divinatio*) or at least to isolate the corruption.

In the usual division of textual criticism into *recensio* and *emendatio* two cases are left out of account -- that where examination leads to the conclusion that the text is either sound or irremediable, and that where the original can only be established by choosing (*selectio*) between different traditions of equal 'stemmatical' value.

¹ Cf. Appendix I.

Questia, a part of Gale, Cengage Learning. www.questia.com

Publication Information: Book Title: Textual Criticism. Contributors: Paul Maas - author. Publisher: Clarendon Press. Place of Publication: Oxford. Publication Year: 1958. Page Number: 1.

B. RECENSIO (cf. § 25)

3. The tradition rests either on a single witness (*codex unicus*) or on several.

In the former case *recensio* consists in describing and deciphering as accurately as possible the single witness; in the latter it is often a very complicated business.

4. Each witness depends either on a surviving or on a lost exemplar. If it depends on a lost exemplar, this lost exemplar either can or cannot be reconstructed. If it can

be reconstructed, this may be done either without the aid of the witness or only with its help.

It will now be obvious that a witness is worthless (worthless, that is, qua witness) when it depends exclusively on a surviving exemplar or on an exemplar which can be reconstructed without its help. A witness thus shown to be worthless (Cf. § 8) must be eliminated (*eliminatio codicum descriptorum*).

5. If there still remain several witnesses after the eliminandi have been excluded (§ 4), then we have a split in the tradition. This can only arise if two or more copies were made from a single exemplar; the 'branches' of the tradition arising in this way appear in the surviving witnesses, with or without further splits (intermediate splits).

The exemplar from which the first split originated we call the archetype. The text of this archetype is free from all errors arising after the split and is therefore closer to the original than the text of any of the witnesses. If we succeed

-2-

then in establishing the text of this, the *constitutio* (reconstruction of the original) is considerably advanced.

The special importance of the exemplar which I have termed the archetype is not contested, and there is no other name available. For this reason we should be careful not to use the term archetype of other connecting links between the original and the surviving witnesses, however important they may be at times. [This reminder has again become very necessary at the present time. 1956.]

6. In what follows it is assumed (1) that the copies made since the primary split in the tradition each reproduce one exemplar only, i.e. that no scribe has combined several exemplars (*contaminatio*), (2) that each scribe consciously or unconsciously deviates from his exemplar, i.e. makes 'peculiar errors'.

On the consequences of a different set of assumptions see §§ 9, 10, 11.

7. On these assumptions it becomes possible in general (a) to demonstrate incontestably the interrelationship of all surviving witnesses, as well as the number and position of all intermediate splits in the tradition, (b) where the primary split is into at least three branches, to reconstruct with certainty the text of the archetype at all places (with a few exceptions to be accounted for separately), (c) if the primary split is into two branches, to restore the text of the archetype to a point where (again with exceptions to be separately accounted for) we have at no place more than two readings (variants) from which to choose.

8. A typical instance (see Diagram). Given are the witnesses A to J (not K), all differing in date and in kind (manuscripts, printed copies, epitomes, excerpts, paraphrases,

-3-

quotations, imitations, translations, &c.). No witness gives explicit information about its exemplar. (a) If a witness, J, exhibits all the errors of another surviving witness, F, and in addition at least one error of its own ('peculiar error'), then J must be assumed to derive from F.

Sometimes a witness can be shown to depend on another surviving witness from a single passage, viz., if the peculiar error in the descendant is clearly due to the external state of the text in the surviving exemplar; e.g. where physical damage to the text in the exemplar has caused the loss of letters or groups of letters, and these letters are missing in the descendant without any visible external cause; or where additions claimed as his own by the scribe of the exemplar reappear in the copy without any such indication; or where in copying a prose exemplar a line has been omitted, destroying the logical unity, &c. (cf. p. 43, bottom).

As all copies must be later in date than their exemplars, we can often ascertain which witness is to be treated as the exemplar if we can fix the date of the script in each case.

(b) If two witnesses, G and H, show peculiar errors in common as against all the other witnesses, and in addition each shows at least one peculiar error of its own, then both must derive from a common exemplar ϵ , from which the remaining witnesses are not derived. The text of ϵ can be reconstructed

1. where G and H agree,
2. where G or H agrees with one of the other witnesses (so peculiar errors of G or H cannot, generally speaking, render the reconstruction of ϵ doubtful).

The text of ϵ is doubtful only where G and H agree neither with each other nor with one of the other witnesses, or if they happen to make the same mistake independently of each other.

-4-

In the same way and with equal certainty the text of δ can be reconstructed on the evidence of F and ϵ and the text of γ on the evidence of E and δ . (c) If three or more witnesses ABC(D) show peculiar errors

in common as against all the rest, and in addition each of the three or more shows peculiar errors of its own, but we never find two of the three (or more) showing common peculiar errors as against the third (or the others), then ABC(D) must, independently of each other, derive from a common source β . The text of β can be reconstructed

1. where any two of the witnesses ABC(D) agree,
2. where any one of these witnesses agrees with γ .

The text of β is doubtful only if ABC(D) all disagree with each other and with γ . So all peculiar errors of ABC (D)E δ

-5-

(and of course those of FGH also) are, generally speaking, worthless for the reconstruction of β and γ , and must be eliminated (*eliminatio lectionum singularium*).

(d) It will be obvious that if any number of further splits in the tradition had occurred after β and γ , the interrelationship of the witnesses, as also the text of β and γ , could be reconstructed with like certainty.

(e) The reconstruction of α is a different matter. If its tradition has two branches only, β and γ , and β and γ agree, we have the text of α . If they do not agree, then either of the two readings may be the text of α ; we have here variants, between which it is not possible to decide on the lines of our procedure hitherto. The reconstructed variant-carriers may be called hyparchetypes.

(f) α could be reconstructed with equal certainty if from each of the branches β and γ only one witness survived, say A and J; A and J would then be the variant-carriers. Still, the position would be considerably worsened if, during the later course of the tradition, further damage had been done to a passage already corrupt in β and γ , or if in a passage corrupt in β but still sound in γ a later corruption appeared in J.

(g) The same would be true if, for instance, A, E, and J had alone survived. In that case, where EJ agreed against A, A and γ (= EJ) would be the variant-carriers. If AJ agree against E or AE against J, the isolated readings are worthless (see above). Only when A, J, and E all have different readings is it impossible to reconstruct either γ or α by the means so far mentioned. We must then try to arrive at the reading of γ from the 'subvariants' E and J (see below), so that this may stand as a variant of equal stemmatic value with A.

-6-

h) If on the other hand only, e.g., AB or EG or GH had survived, it would only be possible to reconstruct the exemplars β or γ or ϵ , and in that case each of the two surviving witnesses would become a variant-carrier for its exemplar.

(i) So far we have found no clue for ascertaining how many steps of the tradition lie between the different points where splits occurred, and how many between the final points of splitting and the surviving witnesses. And if we could find such a clue it would hardly make any difference for the reconstruction of the original (but see (f) above).

9. If α has split not merely into β and γ but also into K or still further branches, the text of α is guaranteed by the agreement of two of these branches. Only when all the three (or more) branches disagree or if the agreement between two could be due to both having fallen into the same error independently of each other is the text of α doubtful.

This also applies to the reconstruction of β , if neither γ nor K has survived.

10. If the first of the assumptions made in § 6 does not apply, that is, if individual scribes have 'contaminated' several exemplars, the process of eliminatio within the area of these 'contaminations' is greatly hindered, if not made impossible.

Contamination is revealed where the contaminated witness on the one hand fails to show the peculiar errors of its exemplar (having corrected them from another source), and on the other hand does exhibit peculiar errors of exemplars on which he does not in the main depend. For instance, suppose there are three witnesses β , γ , and K. If an error is shared sometimes between β and γ against K, sometimes

-7-

between K and β against γ , and sometimes between K and β against β , then β , γ , and K are contaminated with each other, and their isolated readings, which would be worthless in ordinary circumstances (see above), all become 'presumptive variants' for the reconstruction of α .

Contamination need not necessarily have come about through a scribe having two exemplars before him and giving now the text of one, now that of the other; this is a very exhausting and, for that reason, unlikely procedure. What has happened is far more likely to have been something like this: in a manuscript, say F, the dissident readings of the other manuscript, which is not its exemplar -- say A -- are noted in the margin or between the lines; J in this case follows now the first reading of F, now the marginal or interlinear reading. If A and F are then lost, we cannot reach a clear picture of the ancestry of J, since J will show some (but not all) of the special errors of β as well as some (but not all) of the special errors of δ .

Some degree of protection against contamination is provided if a work is transmitted in particular branches of the tradition under an altered title, so that the branches of the primary form are isolated from the individual branches of the secondary form. Moreover obvious corruptions, particularly lacunae, may easily be transmitted in the direct line but are hardly ever transferred by contamination; so that where peculiar errors of this kind occur it will often be possible to establish with probability the original

relation between the witnesses.

11. If the second assumption made in § 6 does not apply, that is, if a scribe does not deviate from his exemplar, it is often impossible to establish the relation of the witness to

-8-

its exemplar and the other descendants of the exemplar. E.g., if F has made no special error in the process of copying from δ , we cannot say whether J depends directly on δ or goes back to δ through F. And if F and J alone survive, then J becomes a presumptive variant-carrier, whereas if we could see through to the true position we should have to eliminate it entirely; so all its special readings must be examined (see C below), even though they may in fact all turn out to be peculiar errors. This shows us how vital it may be to find positive proofs of the dependence of a witness on another surviving witness (§ 8a, note and cf. Appendix I).

Further untypical instances: if a scribe emends a mistake of his exemplar correctly by conjecture without explicitly stating this, the impression may be conveyed that he depends on another exemplar or has contaminated his text from such an exemplar. Therefore correct readings which could have been reached by conjecture must not be allowed to save a witness from elimination if this is required on other grounds. The task of establishing what readings a witness could or could not have reached by conjecture belongs to the *examinatio* of the presumptive variants (§ 19 ad fin.).

12. The interrelationships of the manuscripts of the classics have not as yet, for the most part, been conclusively investigated, quite apart from the numerous instances where contamination makes it impossible to hope for a clear-cut solution.

-9-

C. EXAMINATIO

13. The process of *recensio*, then, leads us as a rule either (1) to a surviving codex unicus, or (2) to an archetype which can be reconstructed with certainty throughout, or (3) to two variant-carriers which either survive or can be reconstructed; these variant-carriers guarantee the text of the archetype only when they agree (not of course when they vary). Disregarding for the moment the latter case (for which see § 19), we must test the uniform tradition of the cases where they agree to discover whether it represents the original.

14. As a result of this *examinatio* we discover that the tradition is either (1) the best conceivable, or (2) as good as other conceivable traditions, or (3) worse than another conceivable tradition but at all events tolerable, or (4) intolerable.

In the first of these four cases we must look on the tradition as original, in the last as corrupt; in the other two cases we may, or must, hesitate.

There is, of course, no absolute standard of good or bad to guide us here; in judging matters of form we must go by the style of the work, in matters of content by the author's presumable knowledge or point of view. As regards subject-matter the classical scholar must often turn for help to other branches of knowledge (technical, &c.); in matters of style he alone is responsible, and it must be his keenest endeavour throughout his life to perfect his feeling for style, even if he realizes that one man's lifetime is not long enough to allow a real mastery in this field to reach maturity. (Cf.